



MONTANA WIC RETAILER NEWS

October/November 2008

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QUICK NOTES

We wish to introduce Carrie Reynolds, our new Retailer staff member. Carrie replaces Mandi Zanto, who left our office to spend more time with her children.

Carrie comes to us from Head Start. Carrie is well versed in a number of computer programs, and will be a great addition to the program and can be reached at 406 444-4746 or creynolds@mt.gov.

Food Package Changes

Pursuant to federal regulations, we will implement a new food package by October 1, 2009. New items to the food package will include: fresh fruits and vegetables; quarts of soy beverages containing a minimum of 8g protein, either shelf-stable or refrigerated; calcium-set tofu in either 8-oz or 16-oz packages; canned legumes in 16-oz cans; whole grain/wheat bread or rolls in 16-oz packages; and/or whole grain/wheat bread substitutes in 16-oz packages, including brown rice, whole-grain barley (not pearl), soft corn or whole wheat tortillas. The bread products must contain at least 51% whole grain/wheat.

If you carry products in your store that meet these requirements, please send either an empty package or a copy of the label including the nutritional panel to this office for review. We must receive them by December 15th.

We will send you new stocking requirements at least three months prior to implementation. More information will be sent to you as we proceed through the implementation process.



Rejected WIC Checks

We have received complaints from several stores, asking what to do with rejected WIC checks. They will correct a check and send it back through the bank, only to have it rejected again for a "Second Presentment".

If you get a check back that is stamped, "Please call State WIC Program" or "State Authorization Required", you MUST send the check and a copy of the WIC transaction, if possible, to the state WIC office for approval. If you are unable to send a copy of the transaction, we will use the prices on your last price survey to determine what we will authorize for payment.

If you get a rejected check that is stamped, "Second Presentment, Do Not Redeposit", you MUST send the check to the state WIC office for approval.

Please send the WIC checks immediately to this office, attention Carrie. She will review the checks, determine why they were rejected, and send you a letter of explanation. We encourage you to use the rejected check as a training measure to educate your staff on how to handle WIC checks. We are available to answer any questions at 800-433-4298, option 2.

String Cheese

String Cheese is available in 12 oz & 16 oz packages, but participants should buy the 16-oz package to get the full WIC food benefit. Of course, it must be the least expensive brand in the 16-oz size.

Please ensure your cashiers only allow what is listed on the WIC check to be purchased.

Reimbursement will be for only the listed WIC-approved foods

Peanut Butter

If a retailer carries a 16.3 oz jar of peanut butter and an 18-oz jar and the 16.3-oz jar costs less than the 18-oz jar. The 18-oz jar can be purchased. This allows the WIC participant to get the full food benefit. This item should also be the least expensive of the 18-oz brands.

Food Lists

It has been brought to our attention that the WIC approved food lists that were revised in June 2008 were not sent to retailers. This has caused some problems because the two food lists differ.

Copies of the laminated revised food lists are enclosed with this newsletter.

Changes in the new food list include the removal of "Malt-O-Meal" brand from the "Toasted Oat Rings" cereal, the explanation that organic milks are allowed ONLY if the least expensive of the variety of milk chosen, (which refers to the fat content rather than organic or non-organic).



However, there is an error in the food list concerning carrots. The carrots should be the least expensive of the type chosen (canned, fresh or frozen) rather than the brand chosen.

Formula Check

We list the type of formula to be purchased on the checks. "Conc" is "concentrate", in 13-oz cans. "Pwd" or "Powd" is "powdered", which comes in a variety of sizes. The size is specified on the check. "RTF" or "RTU" is "ready to feed/use", which is a 32-oz can.

We use abbreviations so we can better spell out the name of the formula to avoid confusion, but check out lines get busy and this can be overlooked, resulting in a participant purchasing the wrong type of formula and the retailer having to bear the cost of the mistake.

Goat's milk.....not a substitute

A new problem is participants trying to purchase goat's milk in lieu of the milk specified on the WIC check. According to the food list, goat's milk may be purchased ONLY if specified on the WIC check. Once again, you will lose the cost of the goat's milk if it is not listed on the WIC check. Please train your staff to only allow the purchase of what is specified on the WIC check.

Thank you retailers!

The following stores were the first to submit perfect August price surveys to this office. (Perfect surveys are entirely completed, signed and dated.) Thank you for your time and efforts!

Albertson's #2041 - Billings

Belt Valley Grocery - Belt

Bear Track Travel Center - East Glacier Park

Curry's Market - Valier

People's Market - Darby

Van's IGA - Bozeman

Price Survey Completions

Please remember to fill in prices for all WIC items you carry, not just the required food items. If you carry the concentrate version of an infant formula and do not list the price, you will be allotted \$0.00 for that item. This will result in the check being rejected by the WIC bank for "Excessive Price".

If you have a stocking exemption, you should still list prices for the various formulas. In the event you order in a formula for a participant, a price will be in the computer system.

Also, PLEASE train your cashiers to allow only the formula specified on the WIC check to be purchased. For example, if the WIC check says, "Similac Advance powder" and you allow the participant to purchase "Similac Sensitive powder", you WILL NOT be reimbursed for the formula. At over \$20 per can for some formulas, this can easily run over \$100, more than most stores can afford to lose.

Common Question

Q. We are having problems with checks bouncing for over the maximum price. These checks primarily seem to be for lactose-reduced milk. What are we doing wrong?

A. The price survey forms ask for a price for both lactose-reduced and sweet acidophilus milk in the same space under the same code number. Please list the price for lactose-reduced milk in these spaces, as it is the higher of the two. This will ensure sufficient funds are available to cover the cost of the milk. Carrie has gone through the computer system and updated the prices so they should not be rejected.

New Issues

URM stores have had problems getting Isomil Advance powdered formula. Gail Stolz, URM buyer, states that they do have the Isomil Advance powder. The case code for the 12.9-oz Isomil Advance powder is 7007455963. Please contact Gail at 509-467-3681 if you have questions.

RETAILER UPDATES

"Welcome" to the following retailer new to the WIC Program since the last newsletter:

Everyday IGA -
Great Falls

Cereal

Cereal is the only food item on the Approved Foods List that is NOT labeled "Least Expensive". If we authorized "Least Expensive" cereals, we would have to determine the price per ounce for each difference size box of cereal, more work than we want to add to anyone's load.



Montana WIC
Retailer News
is targeted for
distribution in
January, April,
July, and
October.

INFORMATION TO SHARE?

Do you have information or suggestions you would like to share with other retailers? Please contact:

Trish Kurek,
Compliance Specialist
Montana WIC Program /
DPHHS
Cogswell Bldg, Rm C305
P O Box 202951
Helena MT 59620-2951
tkurek@mt.gov

Fax: 406-444-0239

The Montana WIC Program is scheduled to be closed on the following days:

Thur, November 27th -
Thanks-giving Day

Thur, December 25th -
Christmas Day

Thur, January 1st, 2009 -
New Year's Day

Mon, January 19th, 2009 -
Martin Luther King Jr
Day

What Do You Know About WIC?

The "claims process" describes the steps the State Office will take to reclaim funds for inappropriate purchases or procedures. For example, if Dial soap and Campbell's soup have been included in WIC transactions taking place over the last two months, the State Office will take steps to reclaim the money paid for these items.

It is important for retailers to notify the state office of any changes in prices. A retailer's new prices may be so high that the assigned price is no longer sufficient to cover the purchase price of authorized food items. In order to make up the lost funds, the retailer might demand and receive the difference in change from the participant. A claim will be instituted by the State Office to recover this money, as well as issuing sanction points for the illegal action. Remember that NO money may be exchanged in a WIC purchase - the retailer may NOT ask for reimbursement of the difference from the participant.

Under new federal regulations, the State WIC Office must create and distribute a list of all authorized businesses from which an authorized WIC retailer must purchase their infant formula. This would include, for example, licensed food distributors, food wholesalers, and authorized WIC retailers. The purchase of the authorized formula purchase sites is to ensure safe and unadulterated infant formula for our smallest participants. This list will be distributed to all WIC-authorized retailers upon completion.

WIC authorization is NOT transferable. If a WIC retailer sells their store, the new owners must apply for WIC authorization as soon as possible. Every effort will be made to authorize the retailer by their first business day. Authorization is dependent on a clean business record, and a successful on-site initial visit to ensure the required quantities and varieties of WIC foods are in stock.

THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (USDA) PROHIBITS DISCRIMINATION IN ALL ITS PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES ON THE BASIS OF RACE, COLOR, NATIONAL ORIGIN, GENDER, RELIGION, AGE, DISABILITY, OR POLITICAL BELIEFS. (NOT ALL PROHIBITED BASES APPLY TO ALL PROGRAMS.) PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES WHO REQUIRE ALTERNATIVE MEANS FOR COMMUNICATION OF PROGRAM INFORMATION (BRAILLE, LARGE PRINT, AUDIOTAPES, ETC.) SHOULD CONTACT USDA'S TARGET CENTER AT (202) 720-2600 (VOICE AND TDD.)

TO FILE A COMPLAINT OF DISCRIMINATION, WRITE USDA, DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF CIVIL RIGHTS, ROOM 326-W, WHITTEN BUILDING, 14TH AND INDEPENDENCE AVENUE, SW, WASHINGTON D.C. 20250-9410 OR CALL (202) 720-5964 (VOICE AND TDD.) USDA IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY PROVIDER AND EMPLOYER.

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